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November 1, 2019

Dear Members of the Lebanon Community,

I would like to update you on some of the challenges that the Lebanon Community School District has been working through the last few days. First of all, I would like to express my apologies to anyone who saw the posting to Snapchat of a photo taken at the Lebanon High School Haunted Barn fundraising event on October 26th. Specifically, I want to express my apologies to our students, staff, and community members of color. As a school district we are committed to supporting each and every student with a safe and respectful environment. LCSD will continue to work through our Racial Equity Team to educate our staff and students in order to provide all of our students a learning environment free from racism, hate speech and bigotry of any kind.

An outline of the facts as they have been presented to us is as follows:

1. On Saturday, October 26, 2019, at the Haunted Barn fundraiser at the Lebanon High School Land Lab, a photograph was taken showing seven students dressed all in black with blackened faces and/or wearing masks.
2. The photo was posted to Snapchat, where a student tagged the picture with a racist comment. When this was discovered, the student took down the picture and was sent home.
3. The students in the picture were not aware of the racist posting, nor did they understand the impact of painting their faces black.
4. The picture and comment were racist and have impacted our students of color. We need to ensure that all students are honored and championed.
5. Counselors will be reaching out to students who may have been impacted by the post in order help support them and ensure their voices are heard.

The Lebanon Community School District team is working extremely hard to improve the academic achievement of every student. When an event such as this occurs it demands that we reevaluate our beliefs and priorities. Currently, our team is moving forward to ensure that our students feel safe and respected and to restore the feeling of positive optimism for our schools and community. The challenge we face is to educate our students regarding racism and bigotry and focus on providing our students with a broader understanding of past and present social injustices that will lead to a broader, more informed, respectful social perspective.

We will be leaning on our Racial Equity Team to help provide support and direction as we continue to focus on supporting all of our students in an environment free from any form of racism, hate speech or bigotry. It is essential that our students understand the historical context to "black face" and appropriate curriculum will be adopted to ensure this.

Bo Yates
Superintendent